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MISSIONARY JUDAISM.

Is Judaism a missionary religion? Has it a propaganda? Are there possibilities that, beyond the confines of the Hebrew race, Judaism is capable of making itself felt as a religious system worthy of attracting people who are not of the "seed of Abraham"? These are questions which have been put again and again by Jews and non-Jews alike. The answers to them vary according to the precise meaning attached to the questions. One obvious, but superficial reply, is to say that for centuries it was as much as their life was worth for the Jews in any part of the world to attempt a propaganda of their Faith. That answer, although still the inevitable one so far as the Jews of such countries as Russia and Roumania are concerned, does not seem adequately to meet the question in respect to the Jews of England and America. Nor does it relate to the inquiry as to the missionary nature of Judaism. And it therefore becomes us to consider the question apart from circumstances of restraint, and apart also from the idea that Judaism is the religion of a single race. Placing out of sight the restrictions of circumcision and family heritage, we want to know whether the religion of Israel is one which embodies spiritual truths and ethical conceptions of a kind which are adaptable to the spiritual and ethical needs of men who are not of the race of Israel. In the following pages I desire to answer this question in the affirmative, and to endeavour to set forth grounds for the belief that there are aspects of the Jewish religion which may commend themselves to a vast number of Englishmen and Americans, and that it behoves English and American Jews who recognise these aspects to set them forth, and show them accordingly.

The present generation of English Christians (I use the word to signify non-Jews) has reached a stage of religious transition. There is distinct evidence of the fact that a large number of persons in this country, who have been christened in their infancy, do not hold fast to the doctrine of the Incarnation, or that of the Trinity. In other words, they do not any longer believe the fundamental dogmas of any of the organized forms of Christianity. Some of these people are Agnostics, many are Theists. It does not follow that dissent from orthodox Christianity is necessarily a separation from religion. The popular notion that there is no alternative between the religious beliefs of Christianity and no religion at all, is so palpably erroneous that it scarcely requires to be refuted. Judaism has undergone transitions too, in some respects similar to those through which Christianity is now passing. The difference, however, between the two cases of transition is of vital consequence, touching the subject upon which the change of view takes place. In Judaism, there is an undeniable modification of opinion in respect to matters of ritual, to rabbinical authority, and in reference to the restrictions required to maintain the identity of the Jewish people. But with regard to the nature of God, as to his oneness, his immutability, and incorporeality, there has been no change whatever. And as to the spiritual relations of the human and Divine, the religion of the Psalmists is still the religion of the modern Israelite, whether he be orthodox or reformer. In Christianity, on the other hand, the alteration of belief touches the nature of the Godhead and the theory of the relation between the Divine and the human. Fundamental dogma is here affected, whereas in Judaism the fundamental dogma remains undisturbed.

The Christian theory of atonement and "original sin" is the one which, probably, more than any other, differentiates Christianity from Judaism. It is necessary to notice this particular divergence between the two

religions in order to consider whether Judaism presents a happier solution of the problem of sin than is offered by Apostolic teaching. The Christian dogmas on this subject postulate a kind of relationship between God and man which is not the same as that which is held in Judaism. The basis of any system of religion is undoubtedly something that belongs to the sphere of belief. And those persons who argue that Judaism is a system of observance only, and not of belief, are ignoring an elementary principle of human reason, namely, that practices must ultimately rest upon a belief. Now it is this fundamental belief, or basis, lying at the root of conduct and of faith, with regard to which Judaism and Christianity, in any of their respective forms, offer two distinct alternatives. Christianity is structurally built upon the hypothesis that, since the beginning of human history, mankind has been placed in a normal state of perdition. The event narrated in the legend of the Garden of Eden was that which brought sin and death into the world, and no human effort is capable of rescuing mankind, either individually or collectively, from the penalty of that great fall which is said to be historic. Then follows the superstructure in the vicarious atonement and the redeeming efficacy of blood by the sacrifice of the "Son of God." This, broadly speaking, is the essential dogma of every type of Christianity. There are, of course, the endless varieties, such as the different notions of the Greek and Latin Churches upon the subjects of the Trinity and the government of the Church; and then again the revolt of Protestantism against the Church of Rome upon the celebration of the great sacrifice, and the headship of the Church. But there is no body of Christians who are not parties to the teaching of the fall of man and salvation through Christ. To this teaching there has been no rival in any of the Christian communities of Europe and America upon any scale of numerical consequence. Christian Unitarianism is certainly a modification of the teaching,

but it still adheres to the idea of a glorified Son of God in the person of Jesus. Within the present generation there has appeared a single clergyman, formerly of the Church of England, who has founded in London a Theistic Church, which definitely repudiates the theory of the Fall, and its consequent theory of redemption. Then there have appeared, from time to time, individuals, such as Bethune English, and corporate bodies, who have repudiated Christianity and (some of them) Theism at once. And we have in London Societies of Agnostics and the "Church of Humanity," founded on the principles of Auguste Comte, as well as a Society of Ethical Culture. But it cannot be said that there has been any missionary effort for teaching religion, that is, the worship of God and moral responsibility, upon the great historic foundation, such as that which Judaism embodies within her history and traditions.

The fact that there is among the educated classes of Englishmen and Americans, as well as among many who are not highly educated, a distinct and widespread repudiation of those fundamental Christian theories, suggests the question with which this article commenced: Is it possible that Judaism is capable of offering a solution to those who are not of the race of Israel? Such a question immediately suggests another: What aspect of Judaism is it which is applicable to the religious needs of those who are not Jews? The difficulty at this point of the subject is, perhaps, less complicated than it appears to be. Judaism, is a great historic testimony to the fact that men have worshipped God, have cherished faith, and acknowledged the claims of righteousness without believing in the Fall, and, therefore, without experiencing the necessity for miraculous redemption from that normal state of perdition. The testimony of this ancient and historic Theism has, without doubt, fallen to an hereditary group of people known as the People of Israel. The identity of this people has been preserved through thousands of years against incalculable difficulties. And the task of that preservation

has imposed upon them obligations of a special and a peculiar kind. Special and peculiar, because their only purpose has been to preserve the group, and they lie quite apart from the great religious message which the Israelites have been treasuring. In proposing, therefore, that Israelites should teach what they know, it does not follow that they should teach those things which are only intended to preserve their communal identity. In such a propaganda of the Jewish faith we have only to consider those elements which are perfectly universalist in their character and their application. Distinctive rites, such as circumcision, eating of unleavened bread, dietary laws, and the particularity of the day for Sabbath observance are, from the nature of the case, institutions which do not possess any important significance for persons who are not hereditary members of the House of Israel. Sacred as many observances of this character appear to Jewish people, their sanctity is of a kind which owes its inspiration to the sense of family tradition rather than to any intrinsic solemnity, such as that which attaches to the practices of giving alms and of worshipping the Deity. The sanctity of such observances as those to which I refer are, of course, greatly enhanced in the minds of those members of the Jewish race who regard them as being not only family traditions, but also as the revealed will of God. The reason why I mention this is that those who believe them to have been divinely enjoined do not believe them to have been enjoined upon any except the people of Israel.

A propaganda of the Jewish Faith at this time of day would historically speaking resemble in some respects the propaganda which the Jew of Tarsus undertook in the first century of the Christian era. In saying this, however, I desire to be perfectly explicit. St. Paul in conducting his propaganda of the faith which was in him did not confine himself to the teaching of the Jewish religion. The age in which he lived, unlike our own, presented Judaism on the one hand, Paganism on the other. In

his judgment, theism, as he had learned it from his fathers, appeared to be incomprehensible to Greeks and Romans. He therefore taught a religious conception which differed considerably from that which he had inherited. And he himself is described as having been converted before he taught others. The only point of likeness, therefore, between the work of St. Paul and the other Jewish apostles, and that which might be done by Jews of the present generation is that the teaching of religion was then, and may again be, the work of persons who have fellowship by race with those whom the Hebrew prophets have described as the "Kingdom of Priests," the "Witness" and the "Servant." It is therefore rather in the sense of continuity in the historic mission of the people of Israel that I mention the apostles here than for the purpose of imitating them in teaching what is subversive of the Jewish religion.

The strength of the Jewish religious position at the present time is this: It is popularly supposed that there is no other way of leading men to God, than by accepting the theory of the fall and the redemption through the death of Christ. It is imagined that in the absence of this teaching there is no other, which is at once spiritually religious, and at the same time possessing the power and authority of long historic experience. The answer to this statement of course is the *Jewish Religion*. But the world knows nothing of the Jewish religion. Even in countries where emancipation has been accomplished for the Jews, and where society has been made acquainted with Jewish individuality or with Jewish talent in art, in jurisprudence and politics, or in finance,—the faith of the Israelite, his inner life, his life with God, the moral springs of conduct with the best of Israelites are all sealed and dead letters to the popular religious mind. The widest misapprehensions prevail as to what constitutes the actual religious faith of the best Jews and Jewesses, both in England and in America. A visit to the synagogue which few people

have made does not throw much light on the subject, because the service and the ritual being mainly oriental in character, and not conducted in the vernacular, are scarcely intelligible to strangers. Moreover, if the service were understood, it would be found, like the Jewish pulpit utterances which *are* in English, to be largely constructed on the supposition, enforced by ages of repression, that this is a special service for a special people. The constant references to the sorrows of scattered Israel, and the number of prayers for peace to be granted "unto all Israel," deeply pathetic and obviously appropriate though they be, would not encourage the idea that Judaism is a religion for people who are not Jews. A student might with indomitable patience study for himself the history and the philosophy of the great men of Israel, and discover, after long and laborious inquiry, how much it contains which is truly universalist, and how little after all there is in it which has a merely local application. Wandering in those mines of learning in spiritual philosophy, he might be amazed, even when examining disquisitions on purely racial ordinances, how intensely human they were. He might be struck with the fact that some ritual detail symbolises a living spiritual truth of the deepest significance, with an appropriateness to the spiritual needs of men who are not Jews. In such a matter as the extraordinary minutiae of Rabbinical laws relating to the burial of the dead and the consolation of the bereaved, he might, if possessed of the necessary temperament, be astounded at the wisdom and the humanity of the intentions of the Jewish sages. Even in the cleansing of the house for Passover, he may discover a sound general proposition that in the poorest homes dust and dirt should not be permitted to accumulate beyond a definite period. In the sanitary arrangements he would doubtless be astonished at the sense and prudence, scientific as well as ethical, which is displayed in them. And in all these things he might consider that the appli-

cation of such laws to masses of the Christian poor would be a godsend.

But such migrations into regions of unknown study are few and far between. My contention is this, that at the present time, amid the multitude of different movements for the promotion of the moral and intellectual progress of our species, conducted as they may be in England and America with perfect freedom, a place of worship might be opened in London by Jews with the avowed object of setting forth to those who might desire to come of their own free will, the conception of God, of worship, and of moral responsibility which the people of Israel have maintained during a period of three thousand years. Is it nothing to tell men what has been the faith even of a single group of their fellows during so vast a period? A faith which has sustained itself through the deepest human experiences of adversity, of sorrow, and of persecution—has not that faith something to testify? Is experience nothing? And what shall we say of the long, tragic, human story of love, of death, and of tribulation? Are these not the common property of mankind? What problem more catholic in its human interest than these?

And what have we to tell as the tried experience of our race as to the conception of the Deity and of the relation between God and man? Howsoever restricted may have been the earliest notions of the ancient Hebrews on this subject, owing to their inception into the first scenes of the drama of history, has not a career developed of growth, of maturity, and indeed of ripe age, from which to draw lessons of life and the story of our faith? Have we not demonstrated to the world that our religion has something about it which can survive the very conditions from which the conventional theologian would suppose it was inseparable? Passing through the successive stages of a wandering tribe, a militant theocracy, a self-governing subject-race of the Roman Empire, to a spiritual com-

munion of scattered groups of families in every quarter of the globe, and finally at this day a religious denomination in the midst of latter-day democracies, holding fast to the same aspirations, clinging to the same moral precepts, and breathing the same confession of faith in the one unseen God whom now all the Western World acknowledge through a Jewish incarnation. No people can speak of God and of faith, of prayer and of the divine love, with greater authority and with deeper knowledge than the people of Israel. After all it must be admitted that the religious experiences of the Jewish people are, above everything, human experiences. The optimism of the Jews, without which they would long since have perished in despair, is an optimism of an intensely religious kind. Their vitality is positively the product of their religiousness. The deep-rooted belief which they have inherited consists of the idea that there is a close affinity between the human soul and the Divine Being. There is an intimacy in this relationship far closer than that existing in the mind of the ordinary Christian between himself and the Omnipresent. Less of fear and more of love forms the Jewish conception of the position of man to God. *Merciful, kind, and gracious* are the divine attributes, which seem to have fastened upon the Jewish thought of God. In the second commandment, where it is said that "He visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children," there is an overwhelming balance on the side of mercy, because that visitation is restricted to the "third and fourth generations of them that hate" God, whereas he shows "mercy to thousands of them that love him." This is one of those ideas touching the relations of God and man which has taken hold on the Jewish mind. I refer to it only in this sense, not as any authoritative revelation, though I do not deny that it may have such signification also. The way in which Jews have to teach their message to the world is not the same as that in which the Catholic Church claims to teach. That is to say, we do not approach our neighbours with a declaration

that we alone possess by mystical powers the keys of the gates of heaven ; but we have a faith which is an experience, and we have to tell of our experience ; in other words, we bear witness of God. The time appears to be ripe for an definite Theistic movement, and the Jews cannot be said to be the wrong people to conduct it. If there is anything in what is called revelation, the element of experience is an extraordinary corroboration. If we regard revelation, not in the miraculous sense of the Day of Pentecost, but still the discovery of essential spiritual truths, experience again is a tremendous power. If there is a revelation of God in history, in literature, and in human experience, what people can testify as a people with such force as the people of Israel ? Any strong Theistic and definitely religious movement which may take place hereafter must assuredly rest its work upon foundations which cannot be shaken by the contemporaneous proceedings in the field of biblical criticism. Whatever has been shown, or remain to be proven, as to the authorship and date of the books of the Pentateuch and of the New Testament, the spiritual experience of the Jewish people stands out as something entirely independent and unmolested. What we have to testify is not of the evidence of an alleged miracle like that of the Easter morn, or, indeed, of the passage of the Red Sea ; nor even of the trumpet-blowing and thick darkness on the Hill of Sinai. We speak only of a record of a vast human experience in the necessity and the efficacy of a life with God. The Israelite of to-day has as much to teach on this subject as the Jew of eighteen centuries ago. He has indeed a wider field of direct religious influence if only he has the courage and the personal gift of grace to exercise it. And here I would endeavour to indicate briefly of what kind of religion the modern Israelite may become again an apostle to the Gentiles.

Apart from the orthodox Jew's belief that he is the custodian of a written revelation intended for mankind,

and already to a large extent accepted, there is the Reform Jew, who, without fear of examining the researches of biblical critics, has his own personal faith. It is a conviction as firm and as potent at least as that of his wandering ancestors who journeyed in a wilderness. God to him is the greatest reality in human experience. The bond of human brotherhood is greater far than that of race. It is true he has no formulated creed or catechism, but herein perhaps lies his chief strength. Doctrines he certainly does hold, and theories as to the problems of sin and death he cannot shirk. There is, however, this difference between his doctrine and that of most formulated ones. He believes absolutely in the harmony—in the indissolubility—of religion and reason. At the same time he does not attempt to deny that the element of mystery is an over-mastering condition of life here and of life hereafter. The New Testament injunction that the Kingdom of Heaven opens its gate to those who become as little children is not new to him. Self-surrender and perfect humility are the conditions in which the highest spiritual truths are apprehended. Vanity and pride veil the sight from what is best. Sin is the gulf which separates the human from the divine. Sin is conquerable not by miraculous transactions, but by resolute human effort in accord with a divinely-implanted power to conquer evil. Prayer is the special privilege of human nature, by which the consciousness of the Divine Presence can be realised. It must be strictly personal, and cannot be delegated to another.

Neither is there any barrier in prayer between an individual human conscience and him who is the Father of spirits. Mediation is unknown to any Jewish conception of worship. The supreme truth about the Israelite's religion is that it is a natural religion. Individualism has a real spiritual meaning. God is revealed to each separately and distinctly, and no external or general revelation, either by miracle or otherwise, is so precious as

that which may be personally felt by an effort of complete resignation in sorrow, and a strong determination in prosperity to resist the temptations of selfishness. God, who is the Sovereign of perfect righteousness and of awful purity, is unutterably near to each individual soul, as if it alone existed. The relation between the Divine and human is not merely general but is essentially personal. We become nearer or more distant in our relation with the Divine Being in the exact proportion of our own personal morality. Living without God and living with God are the two courses which are possible to every man and woman. And the standard of ethics or morality, however disparaging, must have reference to the ideal perfection of the infinitely righteous God. The fact that we have kinship with him renders it possible to live a very noble life. And though we are by the finite conditions of our existence infinitesimal atoms as compared with him, there is practically no limit to the moral possibilities for the development of human character. Whilst the mind seems abashed at the contemplation of a perfect ethical ideal in the Divine Personality, there is nothing in it to terrify or deaden human aspiration. This may perhaps be termed a mystery, but it appears to be one of the manifestations of the Divine goodness which is known by the attribute of love. There is, above all things, an unspeakable love on the part of the Infinite Creator towards his creatures. And we might, with some fitness, refer to the Hebrew Psalmists' idea that righteousness and mercy have met one another. Probably this is the most wonderful solution ever conceived of the problem of Divine perfection and human imperfection. In human experience we have the counterpart of this idea, for it is admitted that the more sinless a man is the more commiseration has he for other people. The doctrine of the love of God is no doubt the most potent of all truths which may be said to have been revealed to mankind. Of course, the human counterpart, which, generally speaking, is the parental and the filial affection,

enables us to form some conception of what Divine love really means. Human affection, in its purest manifestations, sometimes between persons not united by blood, is an obvious illustration, or rather effect, of the Divine love which regulates the relations between God and humanity. A very earnest Christian has recently written a book to show that love is the greatest thing on earth. That is a truth which must be ever present in the propagation of a Theistic religion.

Such, in brief, is the character of the religious teaching which members of the House of Israel who have not separated themselves from their people might promulgate. Congregations could assemble in London and in New York, composed of persons of Christian birth who are unattached to any one of the Christian communions. The time seems to have arrived when there might be an independent Theistic movement—independent in the sense that it would be neither bound by the ritual of Judaism nor be identical with Christian Unitarianism. It certainly would have sympathy with such a movement as the Theistic Church in London, founded by that able, single-minded man, the Rev. Charles Voysey—but its relations with the Old Testament and with an historic past would have the effect of bringing its adherents into a fellowship at least with the most ancient religious organization. There are indeed important details of Jewish ritual so closely knit with its deepest religious beliefs that might be recommended to and adopted by persons who are not Israelites. Even the most racial observance, the Feast of Passover, could be celebrated as the commemoration of the principle of human liberty. And those Hebrew Festivals which have their origin in the summer and autumn changes would serve as valuable landmarks in a natural religion. But with greater force could we recommend the annual day of repentance. The Day of Atonement is, above all things, connected with that alternative already mentioned in regard to the problem of sin. Without the doctrine of the Fall and miraculous redemp-

tion, sin and remission, or forgiveness of sin must for ever confront the religious conscience. Repentance, renunciation and a reconciliation with God can never lose their claim upon the intellect as well as upon the heart of those who believe that they have relations with the one Perfect Being. The modern conception of the Day of Atonement is singularly universal in its appropriateness and in its tendency.

It is scarcely necessary to speak of that great Hebrew institution which, from its inception, was essentially applicable to the physical and moral needs of all nations, and which has been generally accepted, namely, the weekly Day of Rest and devotion. A liturgy could be compiled on the basis of those already in use in the synagogue—translated and revised in a manner to exhibit all those elements of Judaism which are truly universal. It is scarcely necessary to add that practices which are distinctively Oriental, and not identical with the Jewish faith would not be adopted in the plan of worship here proposed. Such matters as the covering of heads and the separation of the sexes, and the abstention from kneeling in prayer, are mere accidents of a national history, and the commonplace badges of an enforced separateness. They would have no meaning for any ordinary assembly of English or American worshippers.

Such a movement as I have endeavoured most feebly and baldly to indicate may appear to some minds, Jewish and Christian alike, as a vague, empty dream. The question which underlies such dreams or aspirations is the question of faith and of conviction. Those who are persuaded that they are right in their conception of religion must at least desire the propagation of their views, unless it be that the conception is such as to exclude the idea that they themselves are types of other mortals. Belief and conviction, whether in science or in politics or religion, logically involve, however, the thought of a mission. The tendency of modern and of Western civilisation is against the ancient partition-

ing of the human family. Whereas in former times, men seized upon what was different, and upon what could raise barriers, now we look for the means of union, of assimilation, and of broad human bonds. The separateness of the Jewish people is to the mind of the Reform Jew not an end in itself, but a means. The long, historic isolation of Israel is to be compared with the isolation of the student or of the philosopher who is separating himself in order to equip himself for a career which is to affect others. And even the most orthodox Jew holds this doctrine, though he holds it in a manner more mystical and undefined than that in which the Reform Jew might conceive it. The great majority of Israelites even in England would not participate in the active propagation of their faith. But such a work has always been the work of the few, not of the many. It would not, therefore, involve any serious rupture within the Jewish fold. The individuals who would engage in it should be persons who are absolutely identified with the religious communion of their fathers, and they would lose much of their spiritual influence if their preaching to the general community were to be the means of removing them from the synagogue. It may be that there are few in number among Jewish congregations who are so constituted as to render them qualified to undertake this mission. One of the most essential conditions of such a Jewish reformer must be a very high development of wide human sympathy. Such a qualification would stand only next to that of intense and all-absorbing faith in the religion he has to teach. In the first instance such a movement would depend primarily on the personality of those who initiated it. It sometimes happens that men are the creatures of circumstances. At other times that men appear to have been born for the age. Nothing less than the fire and the spiritual genius of a Wesley, a Baxter, or a Mendelssohn would assure the success of the first steps to the foundation of a Jewish, English, Theistic Church. On the other hand, men of less scholarship than

any of these might lay the seeds of such a movement, but they must be men of no less strength of conviction and purity of purpose. Whilst the mention of such a movement may awaken the sneers of a pessimist, it is not impossible that it may be more practicable in the near future than any far-reaching reform within the Jewish body itself. And if Jewish reform were to take this direction during the present generation, it may after all be the strongest act possible to justify the claims of Higher Judaism.

OSWALD JOHN SIMON.
